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ABSTRACT

SENDIT is a telecommunications network for North Dakota educators and students in the K-12 environment. Through SENDIT, both teachers and students have access to the Internet, and some of the isolation associated with the rurality of North Dakota has been diminished. SENDIT was developed by the North Dakota State University School of Education and Computer Center for use by school districts across the state. A variation of Cleveland Freenet's bulletin board system, FreePort, was installed on the SENDIT NeXT host computer in 1992. Dial-up access from terminals or personal computers to the host computer is available via 8 toll-free numbers (only in North Dakota), 6 local access lines, and local access lines at 6 county seats and all 11 higher education sites. SENDIT can also be accessed by those having telnet capabilities. Users can access over 150 forums and state, national, and international libraries; send electronic mail; and get new curriculum ideas from other teachers. Over 25 public libraries are members of the system and have the same access as the K-12 community. The system is very popular and useful for small town libraries. (TD)

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SENDIT

NORTH DAKOTA'S K-12 TELECOMMUNICATIONS NETWORK

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SENDIT, a K-12 Telecommunicaions network based in North Dakota serve a an electronic gateway to the Internet for the K-12 community of North Dakota.

Through SENDIT, the K-12 community, both teachers and students, have access to the varied resources found on the Internet.

By using SENDIT, the K-12 community has removed some of the isolation associated with the "ruralness" of the state.

In the state of North Dakota, K-12 (kindergarden through 12th grade) educators and students have plugged into computer BBS-type networking that also gives them access to the Internet, thanks to SENDIT. SENDIT is connected to the Internet, via the North Dakota Higher Education Computer TCP/IP Network.

SENDIT is a telecommunications network for North Dakota educators and students in the K-12 environment. It is funded by the Educational Telecommunications Council (ETC), which provided $694,000 over a three year period. SENDIT has been developed by the NDSU School of Education and Computer Center for use by school districts across the state of North Dakota.

As of December 31, 1992, our user base had 769 teachers, 1521 students, 84 administrators, and 120 other (school of education majors, university instructors who use the system for class assignments. A variation of Cleveland Freenet's bulletin board system, FreePort, was installed on the SENDIT NeXT host computer in April of 1992. (Unfortunately, this required that all of our users re-register on the system, so our user base is still growing.)

As of April 1, 1994, our user base has:

- 260 out of 265 school districts that are members
- Teachers ---------- 2294
- Administrators ---- 391
- Students ---------- 5610
- Others (education majors, university instructors, etc.) - 687

Installation of this new software makes it easier to transfer files from teacher to teacher and allows easy, but limited, access to the Internet. It also provided more statistical information about who is doing what, when, and how many times, etc. This accounting data is important because as SENDIT matures and provides access to more services, the providers want accountability.

Through SENDIT, students and teachers can exchange, share, search, and retrieve information. Currently, dial-up access can be from terminals or personal computers such as Apple IIe's, IIGs, Mac's or PC's., and a modem.

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Access to the SENDIT host NeXT computer is available via dial-up lines, including six local access lines for those within a local call of the host NeXT computer, and eight toll-free numbers, which are available only in North Dakota. SENDIT can also be accessed by those having telnet capabilites.

Additionally, local access numbers have been established at the state's 11 higher education sites to provide more local access lines and take some of the pressure off the toll-free numbers. Local-access lines have also been installed at 6 County Seats, with another 25 to be online at the end of June 1994.

SENDIT users access the host NeXT computer to send electronic mail locally and around the world, access state, regional, national and international libraries, and get new curriculum ideas from other teachers across the state and the country.

SENDIT offer saccess to over 150+ Forums which focus on specific topics of interest to its members. They include topics for both teachers and students such as: Chat areas, English, Mathematics, Educational Technology, TAG-L, EduTech, Kidsphere, K12Net, SCHLnet, Academy One, etc.

Additionaly, forums can be and have been established for members only so they can exchange ideas privately. Examples are Ag Education, Technology Education, Odyssey of the Mind, etc.

Other popular areas include CNN Newsroom guide, Newsweek guide/quiz, discussion groups, historical documents, Government BBS, Government Gophers, etc.

Access to our college libraries like PALS and the State Library is a popular service. This includes access to ERIC searches. A teacher can now access Colorado Alliance of Regional Libraries (CARL) in Denver, Liberty at Washington & Lee, and others located throughout the nation.

Interestingly enough, there has also been an interesting development involving SENDIT. This development involves several foreign exchange students exchanging e-mail with friends and relatives back in their home country.

A recently added service to SENDIT is the ILL (Inter Library Loan) service. ILL enables SENDIT users to send a request for materials (books, periodical/newspapers) to the State Library. The request can be for materials they have found on any of the libraries our SENDIT users have access to. Since January, 1994, there have been over 17,000 ILL requests.

SENDIT also has 25+ Public Libraries that are members of the system. They have the same access as the K-12 community, and has proven to very popular and useful for small town libraries.

The cooperation between higher education and K-12 schools came about as part of a requirement which needed to be satisfied in a National Science Foundation (NSF) grant application for statewide Internet TCP/IP protocol for all colleges and universities in the state system. That NSF grant was subsequently funded. State and national administrative sources are urging and/or mandating this type of cooperation between universities and school districts.

Money from the grant was used to purchase the SENDIT NeXT host computer, hire personnel, purchase and install routers, other hardware, etc.

The Internet is now accessible to all our colleges and universities due to recent NSF and ETC grants which funds more telephone ports and necessary equipment. This enables at least 75% of the state's population local call access to the systems.

During the summer of 1994, we are looking at implementing SLIP at all local access lines to allow the use of MOSAIC, CELLO, etc.